

BALTIMORE NEWS AMERICAN

28 JANUARY 1976

# Colby: CIA Leaks Cost U.S. 'Contacts'

• Second of four articles based on an exclusive interview with CIA Director William Colby.

By KINGSBURY SMITH  
National Editor  
The Hearst Newspapers

WASHINGTON — America has lost 50 foreign contacts and its intelligence operations have been "very badly" hurt in the past few weeks by the leakage of secret information given to congressional committees.

This was disclosed by William Colby, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, in an exclusive interview with The Hearst Newspapers.

Last year Congress enacted a law compelling the CIA to report its covert operations to six committees. Almost everything reported to those committees has, Colby said, been leaked to the news media and spread around the world.

"We have lost something like 50 of our foreign contacts," he added. "It's not the numbers that is important. It's the quality of the services rendered."

"Some of our best contacts have cut off their relationship with us. They have said they just cannot continue to work with us because of our inability to keep secrets. Many of these people are very worried about the situation."

"Some of the foreign intelligence agencies which have cooperated closely with us have reduced the level of information they give us. They limit the sensitivity of the information they had previously shared with us."

"I am, quite frankly, very upset about this. Up to a few weeks ago I had hoped we might get through this situation without any serious damage to our foreign sources and friends. That we could say to them: 'We haven't exposed you and we haven't exposed individuals.'"

"Unfortunately, the erosion in the past few weeks of all the secret reports to Congress has frightened a lot of our friends around the world. I have to say our position has gone very badly in the past few weeks in terms of confidence requirements."

Colby recalled reading a recent column in the London Daily Telegraph which said, in effect: "What is America doing to itself? Come, we don't mind you playing around, but don't destroy the single best hope in the world," meaning a strong America with efficient intelligence services.

Colby says he feels that the Water-

gate and Vietnam experiences caused Congress to turn the spotlight on secrets in government — and the biggest secret operation is, of course, the intelligence business.

While the investigation of the CIA revealed some misdeeds, which the director attributes to an "excess of zeal," he thinks the American people have been given a "totally false image" of what is generally recognized as the world's best intelligence service.

"If you asked the average American citizen in 1975 to associate the word CIA with something, you would probably come up with assassination and the dart gun," Colby said. "But we never assassinated anyone and the dart gun never was used."

"If you read the Senate report rather carefully, you will note that we did take steps to try to bring about the demise of two individuals, neither of whom died as a result," Colby was referring to Cuban dictator Fidel Castro and Congo leader Patrice Lumumba.

"There were certain other activities that involved people getting killed in the process of a coup or something like that but they were not assassinated by us. You come down to the fact that we did not assassinate anybody. To create the impression that our business is plotting assassinations gives a totally false image of the CIA."

The 56-year-old, St. Paul-born CIA veteran, whose intelligence work dates to 1944 when he parachuted behind the German lines in France to join a resistance group, was appointed director in May 1973.

Formerly head of the CIA's clandestine (covert) operations, otherwise known as the "Department of Dirty Tricks," Colby thinks the good things achieved by the agency's covert work have been ignored while attention has been focused on some illegal activities which he admits were wrong and should not be allowed to happen in the future.

However, he points out the wrongdoing was mostly due to an excess of zeal encouraged by a long time presidential and congressional policy towards the intelligence service of: "Do it and don't tell me."

"That was dangerous," he said. "I believe one of the reasons we did get into trouble was because we were not supervised. There should be active supervision by responsible people, but the leakage of secrets and confidential information concerning intelligence activities must be plugged."

With regard to the covert operations, which represent in terms of cost only 5 per cent of the CIA's functions, Colby suggested people look at the record.

"It is popular to point to the Bay of Pigs and things like that," he said. "The impression is created that these covert operations were all a disaster, but the facts are different."

"For example, Western Europe in the late 1940s was faced with three grave threats: the military threat, which was met by the establishment of NATO, the

economic threat, which was met by the Marshall Plan; the political subversion threat represented by the Soviet-oriented Communist parties, leftist trade unions, Soviet-sponsored cultural and youth movements. That third threat was met by CIA operations, by its help to the Democratic forces. And that battle was essentially won."

Q — Do you mean the CIA played a major role in saving the Western European countries from Communist subversion?

A — "Yes, and not only Western Europe. In the early 1960s the general impression was that the Cuban revolution was going to sweep like wildfire through Latin America. 'Che' Guevara, that great romantic hero, was going to lead all Latin America and turn it around into a totally hostile continent."

"How did we meet that threat? With a political program through the OAS (Organization of American States) — with an economic program through the Alliance for Progress, and with CIA assistance."

"As a result, Latin America is not hostile to the United States today. Guevara and revolution did not sweep like wildfire through Latin America. I am not saying that CIA did it alone, but it made a major contribution as part of a national program on a strategic level."

"The Bay of Pigs was a mistake. It didn't work. It went wrong. But to characterize the CIA's operations in Latin America as the Bay of Pigs is just plain wrong also. A lot of things the CIA did were very successful."

"I don't mean the overthrow of Chilean President Allende. We did not overthrow President Allende. What the CIA did in Chile was to try to support the democratic forces there, as we had done in Western Europe."

"President Allende exacerbated the situation with his economic policies, with his pressures on the middle class and on the country to the extent that finally the military overthrew him. We had nothing to do with that coup."

"Over the years there was only one time when we went out with the idea of trying to overthrow him. In 1970 there was a period of about a month in which we were looking around to see what we could do at the specific direction of our President. All we were trying to do there was to help the democratic forces with a view to free elections."

President Allende got himself in a position where the Chilean congress, the supreme court and the controller general all issued statements saying the president was operating outside the constitution. Imagine what would happen in this country under such circumstances."

**Continued**

Q — What role has the CIA played in averting wars?

A — "Sometimes you predict the possibility of an event that doesn't happen. Were you wrong? Maybe. But maybe also you generated action that prevented the event. In other words, you caused your government to take diplomatic steps that averted the war.

"Another example is the SALT agreements, which curbed the nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union. Those agreements would not have been possible without the intelligence information supplied by the CIA.

"Even in the more precise question of local wars, there have been several occasions on which we have informed our government that two countries were building up to a situation where they were likely to have a fight pretty soon unless something was done. Our government has gone to both parties and persuaded them to avoid a conflict. That has happened on at least two occasions."

Q — Has the CIA helped to save the lives of allied or friendly foreign leaders and political personalities?

A — "I know of one situation in which we got a tip on an assassination plot against an individual and passed the word along. He still is alive, though he is not very friendly towards us."

Q — In what part of the world?

A — "The Middle East. There have been other occasions when we have alerted foreign governments about possible assassination attempts on exiles from the East. Certain Eastern intelligence services have assassination goals who have been out in the West looking for people."

Q — Were lives saved?

A — "Sometimes. Sometimes not. A Ukrainian exile leader was killed in Munich. It was pure murder. You don't win them all. We have a very careful way of handling people like that. When they come to this country, we give them another name, a new identity and resettle them some place with a background that enables them to explain theoretically where they came from so that they disappear into our society. We support them."

Q — Have the activities of the CIA generally been within the scope of the practices of the world's leading espionage services?

A — "I would say yes. CIA has run an American service. It has generally reflected American standards and American ways.

"Twenty years ago, America was deeply concerned about the cold war. We did a lot of things to fight that war and, with a few exceptions, we did it within American standards of decency.

"Take the mail interception, for instance. There is a law which says you cannot open first class mail. We shouldn't have opened first class mail, but transport yourself back to the 1950s when this happened. At a time when we had Soviet spies in this country, when they were stealing our atomic and other secrets.

"There was a threat around the world. We began to open some mail to and from the Soviet Union. Not all mail. Not internal American mail, but mail to the Soviet Union which then was considered a great danger to our country. We shouldn't have done it without authorization. It was illegal, but I certainly understand why people did it.

"The misdeeds in CIA's history have, I think, been the result either of a direct order by the President or because there was a gray area as to what was proper and what was not.

"Some things we did were wrong. They were done through an excess of zeal and because it was believed they were in the interests of our country at the time. I think the CIA is a lot milder than most other intelligence services. We reflect America and the people here are good Americans."